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NAMNAM

XXXVIII

THE NAMNAM

History, Tribal and Clan Organization

101 161 131 THE Namnam (*Anglice* Nabdams) are a tribe numbering 8,063. They inhabit the triangular strip of country bounded on the east by the Red Volta; the Talense lie to the south, the Nankanse on the west. They are among the smallest of the Northern Territory tribes. The people call themselves Namnam (sing. Nabt), the language Nabte, and their country Nabrug. The Namnam call the Kasena, Yuls, and the Nankanse, Gurse; the Kanjagas, Bulse, and the Mampruse and Dagomba, Dagbwan. Specimens of the Nabte language have been given in Chapter III.

103 173 167 563 622 793 The capital town (*teya*) of the head Chief is Nangoot (*Anglice* Nangode). The following history was given me by the head Chief: 'Our first ancestors were called *Loro* and *Zan*. *Zan* is the name of a tree which was this ancestor's *segere*. There was a quarrel about the Chieftainship at Naleruk (Naleregu, near Gambaga) and these ancestors of ours, who were full brothers, left Gambaga and first settled near a place called Gos, in the Kusase country. There was nothing but thorn scrub there, so the place was named Namgoel, "the Chieftainship of thorns". We quarrelled with the Kusase and came here and gave the place its name. When we came here, we found a people who had not any Chiefs, only *Ten'danam* (*Ten'dama*). They spoke the language now called Nabte. Our people followed *Loro*, and *Zan* became the first Chief. He died and is buried here. The people whom we overtook here, we called Namnam. We became their Chiefs. [421] We own the people, the *Ten'danam* own the land. The present *Ten'dan'* is called Biriwanab, his grove (*tengwan*) is known as Dakyirig. The *Ten'dan'* makes sacrifices to the land. *Ten'danam* are like your European doctors. *Zan* was succeeded by *Dyeten*. I think he was *Zan's* son, but it is a long time ago. Each Chief when he dies has a stone which is [778] bathed, rubbed over with shea butter, and kept in the compound of the new Chief in a room. These stones are called *kpwim kuga* (spirit-stones). A sacrifice is made once a year to them. *Dyeten* was succeeded by *Pubuge*. During his time, we heard that the black gun-men (Ashanti?) came with war and reached Akorog (lit. the River). We met them with arrows and had many men taken captive.

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632 and intelligent man (see Fig. 79), informed me this was the constitu-
622 tion long before the Europeans came. 'A *Kambon-nab*', he said, 'is
624 succeeded by any one who asks for the post, but if there are many applicants, the wishes of the people of the *teya* were taken into consideration.'

651 *Tribute*: The head Chief stated that he received yearly tribute of
622 corn, ground-nuts, and beans, and that friends for whom he settled cases would 'thank him with a sheep'. He also received presents from the *teya* heads, whose appointment lay with him.

651 'When a beast is killed in hunting, the whole beast is given to the
622 section-head of the hunter who killed it. He, in turn, sends a hind leg
224 to the *Kambon-naba*, who sends it to the Chief, who shares it with the *Kambonnannam*.'

624 *Work of Section-heads: Ten'dan': The Territorial Ruler*: 'The section-
622 heads settled adultery cases. If blood were shed on the land or any one
793 was killed, or if rain did not fall, a cow or sheep or goat was given by the Chief to the *Ten'dan'* to sacrifice and purify the land. Now-a-days most Chiefs do not do so. Before you Europeans came, we Chiefs recognized the *Ten'dan'*. The reason others do not do so now is, that since Europeans came, many new Chiefs have been made, who know nothing about Chieftainship and only want to look after their own bellies. I myself have continued the old things. After the sowing we collect things and give to him (the *Ten'dan'*) to sacrifice. I have not, like most Chiefs, taken away the *dawa dawa* trees from the *Ten'dan'*; when I am in need of some, I buy what I require. Formerly Chiefs ate out of calabashes, now they try to eat out of a basket.'

624 Heads of sections, of whom there are four at Nangoot (in charge of the sections known as *Zoa'bis*, *Beam-bis*, *Isaka bis*, and *Kpea-bis*),[1] report to the *Kambon-naba*, who in turn report to the Chief.

622 The Chief of Nangode, with whom I was very much impressed, informed me that he had continued the old system of Native Administration, although 'few other Chiefs now do so, which causes the spirits in the groves to lament'.

793 *The Ten'dan'*: The following was told me by the *Ten'dan'* of Nangode (see Fig. 80): 'My ancestor owned the land. I was head *Ten'dan'* [421] (*Ten'dan' kpwem*). The Europeans have given power to the Chiefs, who now own the land. My ancestors owned *dawa dawa* trees, and lost beasts, and when men shot arrows and killed any one, a cow was [783] given to purify the land. When some one wanted to build a new house,

[1] *Bis*—children, i.e. descendants.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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CHAPTER XI

LAND, LOCALITY, AND THE EARTH

Definition of the Bonds between People and the Land

As we have already seen, there is in Tale social organization an intrinsic connexion between every defined social group or part of a social group and a specific locality. Now there are, as yet, no communities in Taleland consisting of aggregations of individuals or families of completely heterogeneous cultural or genealogical origin, whose sole common interest in the locality they occupy is utilitarian, and whose sole bond with one another is their common subjection to a single political authority. As we shall see, even in the new peripheral settlements, which are now, under the pressure of land shortage, being permanently occupied by mixed populations, the decisive bonds of association are ties of consanguineous and affinal kinship. It could hardly be otherwise in a society so homogeneous and also lacking centralized government.

The connexion between community and locality has the three aspects found in all Tale social institutions. It is utilitarian—for men build their homes on the land and get their livelihood from it; it is also morphological, particular units of the social structure being tied to defined localities so that the social unit and its locality form a single entity; and it has a moral and ritual coefficient. Men have moral and ritual relations with one another and with the land in virtue of their occupancy or utilization of particular portions of its surface. We have touched on this in our preliminary remarks on the Tale concept of *tey*. We return, here, to the further elucidation of this concept.

The bonds between a community and a locality, or between an individual or a lineage and land, are summed up in the idea of 'ownership' (*solɔm*). This concept, which occurs in various contexts, has certain general implications. Where it is a matter of property such as land, or where persons or localities associated with social groups are concerned, to 'own' (*so*) them means to have responsibilities towards and for them, rights over and on behalf of them, privileges and duties in relation to other individuals or corporate groups in virtue of being the 'master' (*daana* or *-raana*) of the land, locality, or person in question. In every case, there is no such thing as purely utilitarian ownership. Utilitarian ownership exists within a framework of the relations of a defined social group to the land, the person, the locality; and this framework, in turn, is held together by a scheme of moral and ritual values and sanctions.

Thus, in the case of land, exercising or acquiring 'ownership' for productive purposes is regulated by clanship and kinship ties and limited by the moral and ritual values of the ancestor cult and the Earth cult. In some circumstances clanship or kinship may be the more important determinant, in others ritual considerations may be the vital factor. The three aspects of 'ownership' may be vested in the same individual or group, or in different individuals or groups. But they are always there.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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621 The natives cannot imagine any tract of land or territory being totally
421 unconnected with a human group. Most tracts of uninhabited bush are 'owned' by chiefs, who have ritual jurisdiction over hunting rights. But some tracts of untilled and uninhabited land (e.g. between Biuŋ and the river) appear to have no 'owners', either secular or ritual. The natives say the 'owners' have died out. The land did at one time have a connexion, perhaps only a ritual connexion, with a human group, and this connexion remains mystically effective still. Such areas of *wasak*, as the natives call them, are economically a free good. Anyone can come and build or cultivate there. But a man who does so will try to find some person or some clan to offer sacrifice to the Earth on his behalf, as the residuary legatee of the defunct 'owners', through local or clanship ties with them. If he fails to find anyone, he will consult a diviner to find out for himself where the sacred spots are in this stretch of *wasak* and make the sacrifices himself, thus creating a moral bond with it. Nowhere is the Earth inert; and its mystical powers are a reflex of its relations with human groups.

The three functionally differentiated aspects of man's relations to territory in Taleland are interconnected in Tale thought and custom in a rather complex way, and local differences blur the general principles. The simplest approach will be from the starting-point of land used for agricultural purposes. This is by far the most important economic use of land, but not the only one. There are few products of nature on the earth's surface that the natives do not make some economic use of, or rely on for other practical purposes. It is easy to see, therefore, why the natural environment is built into the social organization and invested with values and meaning in the social philosophy and ritual beliefs of the Tallensi. Our analysis would lead to the same conclusions if we started from uncultivated bush (*moog*), for instance, the source of essential products such as firewood, wild fruits, shea nuts, thatching grass, reeds for matmaking, rafters, medicine roots, and so forth, as well as of game and wild fowl.

Farm-land and Subsistence

311 Land means many things to the Tale farmer. He distinguishes, firstly, between the soil (*tam*) and the arable, or tilled land (*kuob*). He recognizes and takes into account different kinds and qualities of soil. This is something independent of the tillage of the land; and, conversely, cultivation (*kuo*, from *kɔ*, to hoe) turns any kind of soil (*tam*) into arable (*kuob*). Tilled land, again, is classified, without reference to soil qualities, by its location and by the kind of crops grown on it. Thus, every farmer has one or more home farms (*saman*) in the settlement and one or more bush farms (*poog*) in an area free of human habitations. In addition, a particular farm is merely a parcel of land, a bit carved out of a *tɛŋ*. In this context a *tɛŋ* is a stretch of territory in its useful, material aspect. One can speak of such and such a *tɛŋ* as being very fertile, or as having a sandy soil (*tambiihug*).

241 Farming is the basis of the Talaŋ's livelihood. A failure of crops,
731 nowadays, spells widespread privation. Thirty years ago it would have brought famine. Tallensi often talk of this, especially when unpropitious

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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581 which cannot be done without the assistance of women. He can com-
593 mand other services from her. For instance, nowadays he can send her to buy grain for him in distant markets and sell it for him in the home market; and he can ask for many little services that make life more comfortable for him. A man has a right to these services; but it is a right limited by the principle of reciprocity.[1] In return a man is bound to protect and care for his wife, in particular to provide her with a home, with food, and with curative treatment if she is ill.

593 There is an obvious material basis for the economic reciprocity of husband and wife. Primarily it is a function of the system of economic
592 co-operation, by means of which the household satisfies its material wants. The head of the family owns the land and the livestock from which all draw their sustenance. The men do the heavy work of farming and care for the livestock. The women perform the tasks already mentioned. Within this subsistence unit the rule of reciprocity of economic rights and duties governs the economic relations of parent and child, of brother and brother, as well as those of husband and wife. For it is an application of the wider principle that all those who pool their labour in the common task of providing food and shelter for the household are entitled, severally, to a just share in the product of their common labour.

593 The authority of husband over wife in the matter of economic duties and services is tempered, also, by a principle that really follows as a
●421 logical corollary upon the principle just stated. The products of individual industry and enterprise belong to the individual, subject to the nominal over-right of anyone who has authority over him or her, in particular, of the head of the family. The rule applies to all property relations between the members of the family. Thus, as soon as a wife acquires a *dug* of her own she begins to have a certain degree of economic autonomy, and this increases with the passage of time, as her children become more and more able to do without her regular care. She has her own vegetable plot allocated to her by her husband. She often has a ground-nut plot of her own, which she cultivates herself. She has her small private store of grain, obtained by gift from her father or brothers or other kinsmen. Her vegetables, her ground-nuts, and her grain do not go into the pool of family resources. They do, however, serve to supplement these resources; for it is a woman's duty to provide the vegetable food, and it would be unthinkable for her not to use other supplies she may possess to feed her children and her husband in time of scarcity. But if her private supplies are not required for this purpose she can dispose of them as she pleases. She can exchange them for money or goods, or use them to give hospitality to her own kin or guests. The same rule holds for such things as shea fruit and shea butter, which
[437] it is a woman's duty to provide for the household. Thus, it is common for women to barter surplus shea nuts for household utensils, and these are entirely their own property.

[1] Cf. p. 213 below.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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are entirely their own property. A woman owns the sleeping-mats she makes. A potteress is in the same position as a blacksmith or leather-worker. She keeps the money or natural products for which she exchanges her pots. Nowadays many women who live near a market carry on a regular or intermittent petty trade in cooked food. Sometimes, borrowing the small capital (two or three shillings is sufficient) with which to start, they keep the profits of their trade. It is not uncommon for women to own livestock, mainly poultry but often sheep and goats, and occasionally a cow. They may be obtained by gift or purchase, in the case of small stock, or by exchanging the natural increase of small stock for more valuable stock. A woman's sheep, goat, or cow will be herded with the family livestock, but her 'ownership' (*solɔm*, from *so*, to own) remains secure.

A woman's clothing, and her household utensils, most of which she provides for herself, belong to her solely. They are distributed, on her death, to her daughters, daughters-in-law, and sisters. Any money or livestock she may possess passes to her sons on her death, these being what might be called consumers' capital goods, the appropriate owners of which are men. They remain, therefore, in her *dug*, and do not accrete to the patrimonial property of her husband's effective minimal lineage. But it is an accepted principle that her husband has an over-right to them in her lifetime. For, as the natives put it, 'How can a man own his wife and not own the products of her labour?'

There is a quibble in this statement, the concept 'own' being used first in the sense of 'to have authority over', and secondly to mean 'having full rights of disposal over'—rights *in personam* being equated with rights *in rem*, to speak in lawyer's language.[1] And the Tallensi are not blind to this. Theoretically a man is entitled to utilize his wife's property as he wishes. In practice, he would not dare to do so without her consent, and the transaction is looked upon as a loan (*samɔr*). True, like all loans within the domestic family, it is not subject to book-keeping. But just as the woman feels morally bound to put her possessions at her husband's disposal if he is in difficulties, so her husband feels in honour bound to repay her in time, and generously, if he has any self-respect. Similarly, if a woman contracts a debt without her husband's knowledge and explicit permission he cannot be held liable. But no 'man of sense' would publicly repudiate his wife's debt. He reserves his reproaches for the privacy of the home. Significantly, a man does not, as a rule, settle his wife's debt. He will try to temporize with the creditor—an art in which the Tallensi are past masters—until his wife succeeds in finding the wherewithal to satisfy him. Or, if the husband cannot avoid paying the debt, he considers this as an advance

[1] Cf. Radcliffe-Brown, A. R., 'Patrilineal and Matrilineal Succession', *Iowa Law Review*, xx. 2, Jan. 1935, for an illuminating discussion of the anthropological relevance of these legal concepts.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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paternal control when he has no more fathers in the nuclear lineage. The death of his own father marks the beginning of what might be called this process of emancipation, though it is not overtly felt to be that by the natives. As previous references have shown, this is usually the thin end of the wedge that in due course splits the joint family economically and eventually gives the sons jural and ritual independence. It is not too much to say that the cycle of fission and reintegration in the joint family, with its co-ordinate processes of ramification in the lineage, is kept in motion by the deaths of fathers. That is one reason why the relations of successive generations are most conspicuously symbolized in funeral rites and ceremonies.

Underlying all changes in status due to the extinction of particular social relationships are changes in property relations which include, for the Tallensi, both rights over people and rights over material objects and economic resources. These rights pass from one generation to the next by inheritance or succession. There are rights over farm-land, the basic capital resource of the natives, and over homesteads; rights of disposal over livestock and other valuables, as well as over services and social bonds that have been created in exchange for valuables; rights over the working power and allegiance of men, women, and children; and last but not least, rights to the custody of ancestor shrines and other religious objects and to the politico-ritual offices that go with some of them.

All these property relations are tied directly to the lineage structure; they are graded and interlocked with one another in conformity with that structure. They fall into two major categories: patrimonial rights and property, for which the Tallensi have a specific term, *faar*; and individual rights and property, for which there is no specific term. Looking at it through native eyes, in terms of the continuity of the lineage and the march of the generations, we can see why this is so. *Faar* belongs to the lineage—it may be only the nuclear lineage or it may be the maximal lineage. All the members of the lineage are potential heirs to it. But the man who is in possession at a given time has complete freedom in using it—though not in disposing of it. On the other hand, individually acquired property and rights belong to the individual. A 'fatherless' man is free to use, dispose of, or destroy his individually acquired property—be it a piece of land, an animal, a garment, money, or whatnot—as he wishes. A man subject to some degree of paternal authority is in theory obliged to be ruled by his 'father' in the use and disposal of his individual property, though in practice he has a very large measure of freedom in this matter. But the crucial point is this. Individual property becomes patrimonial property when, as inevitably happens on the death of the original owner, it is inherited. In this way it comes about that every segment of a lineage tends to have its own transmissible *faar*.

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593 his father's household making an essential contribution to its economy
882 by his labour and skill; he is his father's future heir; he will one day sacrifice to his father's spirit; above all, it is through him that his father's agnatic line is socially and physically perpetuated. And yet there is the cleavage of successive generations between them and the self-differentiation of the son which begins in childhood.

593 From adolescence onwards economic co-operation is the sheet anchor
421 of the relationship between a youth and his father. The guiding principle is the rule that all those who work together to supply the needs of the household are entitled to a just share in the products of their common labour, and its corollary that the fruits of individual labour belong to the individual. But the working of this rule is complicated by the fact that the head of the household owns the land and 'owns' (that is, has authority over and responsibility for) his dependants. Thus a man 'owns' his son's labour and the products of it. Strictly speaking, a son cannot own property of any kind while his father is alive, and a father can dispose of a son's property as he pleases. By this rule a man does not even 'own' his children if his father is alive; and this means proxy father as well as own father. Tallensi assert this rule very emphatically, both in speech and in act, for they hold it to be the crucial sign of a father's authority. Though this authority arises automatically from the fact of begetting, its most concrete expression is found in the economic relations of father and son. When I asked the Chief of Tongo how many cattle he had he replied soberly that he had none; all his cattle belonged to his old father Nakyɛna'ab. Though, in practice, Nakyɛna'ab will not forbid the chief from doing what he pleases with these cattle, the chief never disposes of a cow, either in ritual or by sale or in jural transactions such as the payment of bride-price, without telling his father and obtaining the old man's formal consent.

The Tallensi regard the economic relations, the jural relations, and the moral and ritual relations of father and son as different aspects of the same thing. Each of these categories of relations has a binding force on the other categories. A man 'owns' his son because he begot him; but he sometimes says that he has authority over his son because the latter is dependent on him and that he has responsibilities for his son because the latter works for him. In the same way a son must work for his father as an obligation of filial piety; but his work is also the return he makes for his father's economic support and for the ritual and jural responsibility his father bears on his behalf. Just which factor is emphasized depends on the particular situation. The different elements of this configuration are linked together by the principle of reciprocity. Its essence is the idea that duties imply equivalent rights for the *tarɔm*, the junior or inferior person, as well as for the *kpeem*, the senior or superior.

This configuration is not peculiar to the relations of own father and son. It is the general pattern prevailing between the head of a household

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and any of his dependants—between husband and wife, proxy father and son, older brother and younger brother. And, as we have mentioned before, its elements often stand out more clearly where the consolidating effect of the emotional ties between own parent and own child is absent. They emerge clearly, also, when there is a divergence between a son's (or other dependant's) desire for independence and his father's (or the household head's) claims on his labour and loyalty.

By the time a young man marries he has advanced on the path to economic independence beyond the stage of breeding chickens for himself. He has his own ground-nut plot and generally also his *sensɛŋar*. This is a plot of land allocated to him by his father, or the head of the household, where he can grow the ordinary cereal crops. It may be no more than a few hundred square yards or it may be up to an acre in size. The larger his father's home farm (*saman*) is and the fewer his brothers, the larger will a young man's *sensɛŋar* be. A man allocates these private plots to his sons with an eye to the future. When, in course of time, the sons (or *their* sons) separate, each will keep the plot given to him by their father as the portion of the patrimonial land that henceforth belongs exclusively to his agnatic descendants.

A young man cultivates his private grain plot and ground-nut plot in the spare time left after he has done the work required of him on his father's farm, which always has the prior claim. There is no hard-and-fast arrangement. Much is left to the young man's own discretion. He knows very well that the first essential is to make sure of the common food-supply. At the same time his father manages to keep a discreet but sharp eye on his economic activities. It is a firm rule of etiquette that no member of a family should go anywhere without informing the head of the family. When a young man goes off to hoe his grain plot or ground-nut plot in the morning he will tell his father, in what seems to be a casual aside, what he is going to do, if he has not already told him the previous day. Then the father will either let him go or he will ask his son to leave it for a day or two until they have finished this or that job on the household farm.

In a well-run family, and at most times, this loose arrangement works perfectly smoothly. But there are times when clashes occur; and there are families in which friction over this issue is common between father and son. For instance, there was the tussle between Naabdiya and his younger son Mosuor. Mosuor wanted to lift his ground-nuts so as to sell them and buy a new cloth for the Giŋgaaŋ Festival. Naabdiya, however, insisted that *his* ground-nuts should be lifted first, before the dry weather hardened the ground and made the task more laborious. Mosuor protested that Naabdiya was being unfair to him; Naabdiya's wife and the other children could help him in the meanwhile; and Mosuor went off to his ground-nut plot. This incensed Naabdiya, who cried out that the boy was flouting his commands, and in his anger he

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593 pronounced the ominous words, 'You will see'. In an hour or two Mosuor's temper cooled off and he began to feel uneasy over the enormity of his offence. His father had uttered what amounted to a curse; and before the day was out he had called on one of his father's oldest friends to ask him to go and beg Naabdiya's forgiveness for him.

593 H21 We have seen in a previous chapter that as a son grows older and his conjugal family increases, his desire for independence grows stronger, owing to the increasing wants of his wife and children. But it is not easy for a son to obtain his father's permission to set up on his own. It may take five or six years of pressure on the son's part before the old man gives way. A son only desires to go out on his own if he has younger brothers who will remain at home to work for his father—there would be no motive if he were the only son. When these younger brothers marry the pressure on the common resources of the household grows and it becomes expedient to disperse temporarily. Economic separation does not remove a son from his father's authority. He can be and often is called upon to help with the work on his father's land; his property still belongs formally to his father. Indeed, any sheep, goats, and cattle he may acquire by his industry or receive for a daughter's bride-price are housed in his father's homestead and not in his.

593 167 Nowadays a common form of independent labour and enterprise by young men is to go south for a season or longer. The chief economic stimulus for this is the desire for money to buy clothes or to make certain of the payment of bride-price for a wife. A father is not bound to provide his sons—or any other dependant—with clothes. These young men go in the dry season carrying crates of fowls to sell or seeking 'white man's work'. The youths who go at other times of the year are often stealing away without permission. But in the dry season, when farm work is at a standstill, a man will often give his sons permission to go south until the rains commence. Some men do so very readily in the hope that the boys will bring back money and 'things'. Others are still reluctant to let their sons go off, even for a short while, lest they should be tempted to stay away for a long time. Tallensi say that the freedom of movement of to-day is undermining parental authority. They say that if a man is severe with his sons, as he has every right to be, they simply run away and go south. Hence the men who think that working abroad spoils a youth or who cherish the ideal of keeping the family together all through their life, and therefore try to restrain their sons from going south, have to be tactful in handling them. Observation shows that it is usually the wise and considerate father, the man who manages his family well, who succeeds in restraining his sons from making long sojourns abroad. Where there is much friction between father and son, the son is apt to find a way out by going south; and, as we have mentioned, the likelihood of a son's leaving home is increased if one or both of his own parents are dead and he is living with

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a proxy parent. As is natural, fathers and sons take different views of this situation. Sons do not think that they are showing a lack of filial loyalty when they go abroad. For, they argue, it is only a temporary absence and the money they earn will eventually accrue, in part at least, to the family exchequer. As has been mentioned previously, no man ever turns away a son who comes home from abroad, whether he brings any goods and money or not; and a son who does bring back 'things' and money is doubly welcome.

We said earlier that a father owns all his son's property. This might seem to contradict what was said about the independent ownership by a son of the livestock he acquires by breeding from a gift hen or by other means. The Tallensi themselves do not admit a contradiction in this. They see it as an instance of the gradation of rights and duties that is distinctive of their whole social organization. A father's over-right entitles him to veto his son's using his own property in ways that seem extravagant; but it would be an injustice rightfully resented by the son if he were stopped from using his fowl or goat or sheep for purposes that public opinion considers legitimate. Thus everybody would agree that a father who forbade a son from using his own fowls and guinea-fowls in his courtship, or from selling his own ground-nuts in order to buy a cloth, would be acting unfairly. The case of Kpana-Tee's grandson (p. 195) illustrates this principle.

The rights of a father and the rights of a son in the son's property are reconciled by the principle of reciprocity. If a man makes use of his son's goat or sheep he should, in due course, make an equivalent return; for example, by using one of his own sheep or goats to do something for the son. This object is immediately achieved if the son's property is used for the son's benefit, as in the payment of bride-price. There is no book-keeping, but in the long run the son should feel that the gains he has received are commensurate with the amount of his own property that has been used up. A proxy father should be more careful in this regard than a man's own father. A proxy father is less concerned about the future of his 'son' than the latter's own father would be and is therefore sometimes inclined to take selfish advantage of his paternal authority. Though they have no alternative but to submit, young men deeply resent unfairness of this sort, whether on the part of their own father or on that of a proxy father; and this may be the first stimulus to their determination to set up on their own.

This is epitomized in one of the reasons Tallensi regularly produce when they are asked why young men secede from their paternal households. They say: 'It is because of hens and eggs.' Every man has at least a hen or two, even if he has nothing else, and, as we know, his hen symbolizes the starting-point of his accumulation of property. But hens lay their eggs anywhere and this gives rise to petty quarrels. Anybody who finds an egg claims it and another member of the family may dispute